

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 COLOMB 00001 161219Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
HA-05 AID-05 EB-08 TRSE-00 STR-07 OMB-01 CEA-01
COME-00 FRB-03 /095 W
-----111832 180333Z /70

R 161130Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 384
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

S E C R E T 1 OF 2 COLOMBO 2292

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CE
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT J.R. JAYEWARDENE

1. SUMMARY. AMBASSADOR HAD REQUESTED APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT PRIOR TO 20 MAY DEPARTURE FOR CONSULTATION IN WASHINGTON. PRESIDENT RESPONDED WITH INVITATION TO LUNCH. ON MAY 15 IN TWO HOUR RELAXED LUNCHEON WITH PRESIDENT AND MRS. JAYEWARDENE, AMBASSADOR AND MRS. WRIGGINS HAD AN EASY DISCUSSION ON MANY SUBJECTS. THIS CABLE SUMMARIZES DISCUSSION ON TAMIL-SINHALESE PROBLEMS, COLOMBO PLAN AND FOOD AID, AND INTERNAL POLITICS. END SUMMARY.

2. TAMIL-SINHALESE PROBLEMS.

OVER PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, MILITANT GROUP OF YOUNG TAMIL SEPARATISTS (LIBERATION TIGERS) ARE ALLEGED TO HAVE ASSASSINATED FIVE POLICE OFFICERS. PRESIDENT HAS ORDERED ALL-OUT EFFORT BY POLICE AND MILITARY
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TO TRACK THEM DOWN. HIS MOST INTENSE WORRY IS HIS FEAR THAT SHOULD THE TAMIL TIGERS KILL ONLY ONE SINHALESE, THE COUNTRY COULD EROUP IN A COMMUNAL EXPLOSION, AS ANGRY SINHALESE WOULD TAKE REVENGE. THAT IS WHY THE ARMY IS ON SPECIAL ALERT (THIS WILL BE COVERED IN SEPTTEL), WHY SPECIAL EFFORT IS BEING APPLIED TO PURSUING TAMIL EXTREMISTS, AND WHY POLICE ARE BEING

GIVEN SPECIAL AUTHORITY TO PICK UP SUSPECTS.

3. THE COMMUNAL SITUATION IS SO INCENDIARY THAT HE IS SEEKING SPECIAL POWERS TO ENSURE THAT THE PRESS DOES NOT PUBLICIZE ANY INCIDENTS WHERE A SINHALESE IS KILLED, THOUGH HE WILL AVOID ANYTHING THAT SMACKS OF "EMERGENCY POWERS."

4. ALTHOUGH MRS. BANDARANAIKE BELIEVES THE JANATHA VIMUKTHI PERAMUNA (JVP) AND THE TAMIL TIGERS WORK CLOSELY TOGETHER, PRESIDENT BELIEVES THEY ARE NOT CONNECTED. I SPECULATED ON THE VIRTUES AND LIABILITIES OF A SEARCH-AND-DESTROY POLICY THAT POLICY AND MILITARY HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO CARRY OUT, POINTING OUT THAT IT COULD BACKFIRE. HE ARGUED GOVERNMENT HAD THIS WELL UNDER CONTROL.

5. HE HOPES THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DISTRICT MINISTERS AND THE CONSEQUENT DECENTRALIZATION OF ADMINISTRATION WITH LOCAL MP'S HAVING MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEVELOPMENT WILL EASE TAMIL ANXIETIES. FOR MANY YEARS THE TAMIL FEDERAL PARTY AGITATED FOR REGIONAL AUTONOMY AND THE DISTRICT MINISTRY REFORM WILL INCONSPICUOUSLY BRING THAT ABOUT. (COMMENT: WHILE IN OUR VIEW THIS REFORM IS LIKELY TO SATISFY THE BULK OF THE TAMIL COMMUNITY, IT WILL NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO
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PULL THE TEETH OF THE TAMIL TIGERS.)

6. POSSIBLE FOREIGN POWER INTEREST IN NORTH?

PRESIDENT RAISED WITH ME THE QUESTION OF WHETHER A MAJOR FOREIGN POWER COULD BE BEHIND THE TAMIL EXTREMISTS. I SAID I DID NOT KNOW; THE LIBYANS OCCASIONALLY DABBLED IN SUCH SITUATION. HE DISMISSED THIS WITH THE OBSERVATION, "I AM NOT AFRAID OF MONEY OR TRAINING FROM THEM." HE THINKS TAMIL EXTREMISTS DO FIND SANCTUARY IN SOUTH INDIA WHICH IS ANNOYING BUT NOT REALLY WORRYSOME. HE WONDERS WHETHER SOVIET UNION DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT INTEREST IN GAINING A STRATEGIC POSITION IN NORTHERN CEYLON, INCLUDING TRINCOMALEE, TO TEMPT THEM TO FISH IN THESE TROUBLED WATERS. I DID NOT CONTRADICT THIS VIEW ALTHOUGH I SAID WE HAD NO EVIDENCE TO CONFIRM IT. HE ACKNOWLEDGED HE HAD NO EVIDENCE WITHER ALTHOUGH "SOVIET PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN ACTIVE WITH MANY VISITS TO THE NORTH" AND ARE BEING WATCHED.

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7. HE ASKED WHETHER I THOUGHT THERE WERE ANY STATES
NOWADAYS THAT SOUGHT TO EXTEND THEIR TERRITORIES LIKE
THE OLD IMPERIALISTS. I REPLIED THAT PROBABLY NOT --
THE RISKS WERE TOO GREAT. THERE WERE OTHER WAYS OF
CONSOLIDATING INFLUENCE SUCH AS SUPPORTING A COUP
GROUP OR PROVIDING MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO A SO-CALLED
"LIBERATION MOVEMENT." WE SAW NUMEROUS EXAMPLES IN
AFRICA RIGHT NOW. HE REPLIED, YES, THE CUBANS ARE
REALLY MERCENARIES OF THE RUSSIANS.

8. CABINET CHANGES.

I REPORTED TO HIM THE WIDESPREAD FEELING OUTSIDE
THE GOVERNMENT THAT THINGS HAD BEEN GOING TOO SLOWLY
DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS AND MANY PEOPLE THOUGHT CABINET
CHANGES WERE OVERDUE. HE SAID HE EXPECTED TO MAKE SOME
SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES WITHIN THE NEXT MONTH AS SOON AS
LEGISLATION FOR DISTRICT MINISTERS WAS ACCEPTED BY
THE ASSEMBLY. IT IS CLEAR FROM HIS COMMENTS THAT HE
IS SO CONCERNED ABOUT THE COMMUNAL ISSUE AND TH STRONG
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ANTI-TAMIL SENTIMENTS AMONG SOME MEMBERS OF HIS CABINET

THAT HE IS NOT NOW READY TO RUN THE RISK OF LOSING POLITICAL SUPPORT BY UNCEREMONIOUSLY DROPPING MINISTERS WHO ARE HIS POLITICAL SUPPORTERS. HE IS AWARE THAT PEOPLE FEEL HE IS BEING TOO KIND TO SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES BUT THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO GENERATE POLITICAL ANTAGONISMS. IF HE FOUND IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE THAT THEY WERE CORRUPT, HE WOULD NOT HESITATE TO DISMISS THEM, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DISTRICT MINISTERS MAY PROVIDE WITHIN THE MONTH A FACE SAVER FOR THOSE EASED OUT.

9. PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

A NUMBER OF DIPLOMATS HAVE BEEN PUZZLED AS TO WHETHER TO DISCUSS INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS WITH PRIME MINISTER PREMADASA, WHO IS VERY BUSY IN DEVELOPING COLOMBO AND HAS SHOWN LITTLE INTEREST IN FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS (THOUGH HE WAS IMPRESSED WITH PRESIDENT CARTER WHOM HE MET ON HIS TRIP BEFORE LAST YEAR'S AMERICAN ELECTION). THE PRESIDENT URGED ME TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND TO SHARE WITH HIM OUR VIEWS ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

10. CUBA.

MENTIONING MOSCOW AS CUBA'S PAYMASTER AND CUBANS AS MERCENARIES IN AFRICA, PRESIDENT SAID CUBA AS CHAIRMAN OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS, BUT THE YUGOSLAVS AND OTHERS ARE AGAIN ACTIVE AND SHOULD BE HELPFUL. THE NAM IS CLEARLY NOT ONE OF PRESIDENT'S PRIORITY CONCERNS. HE STRESSED AGAIN HIS DETERMINATION TO BE NON-ALIGNED THOUGH CLEARLY "VERY FRIENDLY TO THE SECRET

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UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN."

11. NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY.

WHEN HE RAISED THE ISSUE OF "TOTAL"DISARMAMENT AS A WORTHY PRINCIPLE, I MENTIONED THE DIFFICULTIES OF MOVING FROM HERE TO THERE. HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF STATING HIGH PRINCIPLES WHILE I URGED THE NECESSITY OF MOVING TOWARD THEM IN SOME CONCRETE WAY. I URGED THAT ONE WAY OF MOVING IN DIRECTION OF DISARMAMENT WOULD BE IF SRI LANKA WOULD RATIFY THE NPT WHICH IT SIGNED IN 1968. WHETHER THE MESSAGE GOT THROUGH, I'M NOT SURE.

12. COLOMBO PLAN.

ON THE COLOMBO PLAN I INDICATED WE WERE PLEASED TO BE HOSTS FOR THE NEXT MEETING, THAT THE COLOMBO PLAN HAD HAD ITS UTILITIES AND WONDERED IF HE HAD ANY THOUGHTS ON HOW IT COULD BE MORE USEFUL IN THE FUTURE. HE HAD OBVIOUSLY NOT THOUGHT ABOUT IT IN SOME TIME BUT SAID HE WOULD PUT SOME THOUGHT TO IT. HE HAS NO PLANS TO TRAVEL "UNTIL MY JOB IS DONE HERE."

13. FOOD AND PL 480.

ON FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND THE PRICE OF FLOUR, I POINTED OUT THE POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES TO US FOR FUTURE PL 480 ALLOCATIONS IF IT BECAME A GENERAL PRACTICE FOR SRI LANKA TO SELL RICE ON THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET. THIS YEAR'S CROP HAS BEEN SO BOUNTIFUL AND THEIR EARLIER PURCHASES OF RICE IN PAKISTAN AS INSURANCE HAD BEEN SUCH THAT THEY NOW HAVE A CLEAR SURPLUS WHICH THEY EXPECT TO SELL FOR FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS. I REMINDED HIM OF THE AGREEMENT TO MAKE A STUDY OF THE DISINCENTIVE EFFECTS OF PL 480 AND HE AGREED TO
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RAISE THE QUESTION WITH THE CENTRAL BANK.

14. OTHER PROBLEMS.

IN RECENT SURPRISE PERSONAL VISITS TO THE PORT AND AIRPORT, HE HAS BEEN HORRIFIED AT THE LACK OF DISCIPLINE AND THE WAY EQUIPMENT HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO RUN DOWN. HE HAS APPOINTED GENERAL ATTYGALLE, RETIRED COMMANDER AND CHIEF OF THE ARMY, AS HIS SPECIAL ADMINISTRATOR FOR BOTH AND HOPES THAT THINGS CAN BE PUT RIGHT WITHIN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS.

15. WHILE CLEARLY UNDER THE BURDEN OF NUMEROUS PROBLEMS, PRESIDENT SEEMS SERENITY BUT BY NO MEANS SMUG. HE INDICATED LEE KWAN YEW SOUGHT ADVICE ON MEDITATION AND HOW TO FACE DIFFICULTIES WITH CALM. IN RETURN, HE WISHED HE COULD TURN THE PLACE OVER TO LEE KWAN YEW FOR SIX MONTHS.

16. HE GAVE ME A COPY OF A BOOK ABOUT HIMSELF TO PRESENT TO PRESIDENT CARTER, TO WHOM HE WISHED ME TO CONVEY HIS RESPECTS AND BEST WISHES. I EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE BOOK AND ALSO FOR HIS GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO ADHERE TO THE THREE ANTI-HIJACKING CONVENTIONS, WHICH HELP DEMONSTRATE HOW LITTLE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT HIJACKERS ARE NOW RECEIVING.
WRIGGINS

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